

A

S P E E C H,

Intended to be SPOKEN by the

EARL OF ABINGDON,

A T T H E

MEETING convened by the SHERIFF, for the Nomination

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*PROPER GENTLEMEN to represent the County of
OXFORD in Parliament.*

GENTLEMEN,

I SUPPOSE there never was a more important Moment since England was England for the Freeholders of the County of Oxford to step forward and distinguish themselves by a free, independent, and proper Selection of their Representatives in Parliament; and as far as I can take a retrospective View of the Conduct of Members in various Parliaments, as the Representatives both of the County, University, and City, to be sure, since the Annals of Time, never was there such an incongruous Mixture of *Whigs*, and *Tories*, High Church and Low Church, so awkwardly blended together. The blessed Effects of their Deliberations we begin now to reap the Fruits of by Taxations up to our very Throats, though it has been said by some paradoxical metaphysical Refiners of the University (I wish I could experience it *Individually*) that the more the Nation runs in Debt the wealthier it grows: That is, if the People pay four Shillings Land-Tax in the Pound, and from thence to eight, and from eight to sixteen, and from sixteen to twenty, till they get upon the Parish Books, their *Condition* is better.

I give Credit to the present Sheriff for convening us together, that the *real* Sense of the Voters may be collected; for, if I recollect right, our Members, and one of them, by-the-bye, a *new* one, were imposed upon the County without even a Call of the County by the Sheriff, as the proper Appeal to the Suffrages of the Electors; one of those Members, when elected, scarcely or ever attending his Duty in Parliament, and the other, from Debility of Constitution, never so much as to be in a sufficient State of Convalescence to take even his Seat in the Chapel of St. Stephens. A glorious Representation to be sure! Gentlemen, for this enlightened Part of the Kingdom, where the Arts and Sciences, Law, Gospel, and Religion, are supposed to predominate in the most sacred and highest Perfection, Gentlemen, I lament exceedingly

exceedingly that our worthy Sheriff is, by his Office, precluded from being an immediate Candidate, as, in all Probability, Mr. Lowndes Stone, on account of his known Integrity, and good old English Hospitality, so peculiarly characteristic of him, would have been as unexceptionable a Person as any to have stood in the Gap, and supplied the present Vacancy.

In my Apprehension, Gentlemen, and as far as I have Insight and Penetration into the human Nature, I think Mr. Hastings, in these arduous Times, is the fittest Person to be *implored* to come forward. From his great political Depth and Experience of European Knowledge, as well as his Attachment to the British Constitution, both in Church and State, the greatest possible Good may redound to the Nation, and such a Proposition, if liberally adopted by the Majority, would most indisputably reflect the greatest Honour and Credit on the independent Electors. Gentlemen, the present visible advertizing Candidates are two; the first a noble Lord, who originally, with my Relation, Lord Viscount Wenman, represented this County in *various* Parliaments; but as Old England has felt, and still feels the dire Effects of his Support and Assent to *Taxation* without any *Representation*, during a long calamitous, and horrid War with our American Colonies, I should have thought that he would have been the last Man in the World to have renewed his Solicitations. I shall, however, remark nothing farther than "*Si Populus vult decipi decipiatur*;" that is, in plain English, if the People of this Country wish to be cajoled and humbugged out of their Rights and Liberties, by again deputing to the British Parliament a Gentleman who has evidently hitherto paid so *little* Attention to the Welfare and Prosperity of the Kingdom, and so much to his own Interest, the Evil will lie at their Door, not at mine; but of the two would not it be more adviseable for the Interest of the Freeholders to re-adopt the *Nephew* in Preference to the *Uncle*, and not to accept the Transfer and the declining Apology, the "*Chapter of Accidents*?"* The next Person who solicits the Honour of being your Representative is a Mr. Curzon, a Friend and Neighbour of mine, who, in a manly Advertisement, professes his Adherence to the *true* Principles of our glorious Constitution, a Constitution which has so often run the gauntlet through the Vicissitudes of Time; and now, if not actually gone, is bleeding and gasping its very last. But there is one intrinsic Objection for our Consideration, and which is, that as he was bred up in the Roman Catholic Persuasion, a *Test* of his having renounced that Communion might, perhaps, now become necessary, though Credit may be given to him for having grown sick of one of the most unaccountable Tenets of his Church, upon the Principle of the honest Tar, who, being bribed with ten Guineas for abjuring the Protestant Faith, declared he ought to have had ten Guineas more for his Apostacy, *Transubstantiation* being so infernally hard of Digestion.

But, Gentlemen, whatever should be the Result of this Meeting, let me seriously counsel you, as one of your truly faithful *hereditary* Guardians, whoever may have the Honour of being your Elect, let your positive Injunctions be, if you have any Regard for the Dignity of *yourselves* and the Welfare of Posterity, that the *Convention Bills*, those two last degrading Acts, which entrench on your Constitutional Rights, be instantly repealed. That the political Hemisphere is whimsically conducted, I fear, is too true; and I also fear that this whimsical Conduct is not likely to cease. Those who have lived in the *public* World, who have seen the most opposite Parties embrace, and the most heterogeneous Coalitions take Place, will not be surprised at any Change which hereafter may be effected.

* See the Advertisements of the different Candidates on the 25th of May, in the Oxford Constitutional Mercury, of which the Motto is, "PRO REGE, LEGE, ARIS ET FOEDERIS."

In a *System* where public Good is only talked of, and private Interest is invariably pursued, what Wonder is there, that between *Professions* and *Actions* there should be such perpetual Contradictions? There is no Mode that can be so well adopted to preserve the English Constitution, as the one I have so frequently hinted at in all my Parliamentary Debates, that is, to destroy and annihilate what Mr. Burke has laid down, and still adheres to, that *State Popery* of the *Infallibility*, Omnipotence, Supremacy, *Unlimitation* of Parliament in all Cases whatsoever! Gentlemen, if the *Constitution* by a declaratory Law was defined; if it was made (what it is) *paramount* to the Legislature; if it was established as a Standard sacred and inviolable, and made highly criminal in a Member of either House, even by a Motion, to infringe it, in any of its Parts, the most beautiful System that ever was formed for the Government and Happiness of Mankind, might be pursued and perpetuated: but, alas! in these Times of general Depravity and Corruption, this is more to be wished for than expected; for while the Love of *Power* predominates, while the *Amor Sui* totally swallows up the *Amor Patriæ*, the Omnipotency and Infallibility of Parliament will be cried up and supported even by those who are in Power, as well as by those who wish to get into Power, as being the principal Means of attaining the selfish Ends they aim at, in order to keep the People in Sovereign Sway and Subjection, and to secure their own *despotic* Authority. Gentlemen, if the Majority of two Houses of Parliament could but be possessed with a generous Regard for Posterity, and let their Actions be guided by real disinterested Patriotic Views to the English Constitution, it might be said “*Esto Perpetua!*”

But while the Spirit of *Party* and *Corruption* deadens and destroys every noble and generous Sentiment of the Heart, the Constitution is more likely to be remembered than possessed by future Generations. However, a Dissolution has now taken Place, God grant! that it may be attended with a Dissolution of every Thing *Wrong*, and an Establishment of every Thing *Right*.

Gentlemen, I trust there is no undue Influence or Impropriety in these Philosophical Sentiments and Ideas of an independent Freeholder, who thought it conscientiously his Duty and lawful Inheritance to attend the Nominations of this Day; and the rest remains with YOURSELVES.

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SPEECH

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